***Walden* Unit Syllabus**

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**Summary of Unit**

Throughout this unit, students will be reading 4 chapters ("Economy"; "Where I Lived and What I Lived For"; "Spring" and "Conclusion") of Henry David Thoreau's *Walden.* Students will pay particular attention to Thoreau's use of rhetoric as well as his point of view, analyzing how these factors contribute to the effectiveness of the major themes and purposes of the book. Students will exercise their close-reading skills as well as their writing skills through a variety of assessments that require them to identify, analyze, and practice rhetoric themselves. Simultaneously, students will consider Thoreau's purpose in writing *Walden* and draw connections to their own lives based on the messages that Thoreau conveys. At the conclusion of the unit, students will create a multimedia rendition of *Walden* and present it to the class in order to demonstrate their understanding of the text.

**Establish Goals**

**Common Core State Standards**  
**Content Area:** English  
**Grade Level:** 11-12, *Walden* by Henry David Thoreau  
**Domain:** Reading Standards for Informational Text 6-12  
**Cluster:** Craft & Structure  
**Standard: 6:** Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness, or beauty of the text.

**Students will understand that**

* Thoreau uses the first-person point of view to make the purpose of Walden more effective.
* Thoreau uses a wide range of rhetorical devices to help him convey his purpose.
* Thoreau uses his personal experience at Walden Pond to help him convey his purpose

**Essential Questions**

* Why does Thoreau use the first-person point of view in *Walden*?
* How do the rhetorical devices that Thoreau uses contribute to the power, persuasiveness, and/or beauty of *Walden*?
* How do Thoreau's personal experiences in *Walden* contribute to the power, persuasiveness, and/or beauty of the text?

**Students will know**

* rhetorical devices found in the text (imagery, tone, voice, epigraph, ambiguities, analogies, allegories, allusions, contradictions, irony, paradoxes, parallelism, etc.).
* major themes found in the text (the importance of self-reliance, nonconformity, observation, solitude, independence, awareness, reflection, experimental experience, simplicity, and the illusion of progress).
* Thoreau's purposes for writing *Walden.*

**Students will be able to**

* show that Thoreau uses the first person point view to make the main purpose of *Walden* more effective.
* critique Thoreau's use of the first person point of view to make the main purpose of *Walden* more effective.
* exhibit that Thoreau uses rhetorical devices to convey his purpose.
* analyze Thoreau's use of rhetorical devices to convey his purpose.
* consider their own personal experiences in relation to Thoreau's personal experience in *Walden.*
* reflect on their own personal experiences in relation to Thoreau's personal experience in *Walden.*

**Performance Task Overview**   
The online edition of *Philosophy Now* magazine is looking to create a new section that focuses on the presence of transcendentalism (which has often been dubbed "America's first philosophy") in today’s society. To inaugurate this new section of their magazine, they are creating a section titled "The Revival of Thoreau's *Walden:* Why We Need Transcendentalism Today." Within this section, the magazine is hoping to present a series of visual renditions of different themes and/or quotes found within *Walden.* Thus, they will be hosting a contest to see who can best depict transcendentalism and Thoreau's ideals through the modern-day lens of mixed-media rhetoric. You will be taking on the role of a modern-day transcendentalist and, using a passage from *Walden* to guide you, you will create a product that you feel best captures at least one of Thoreau’s major themes that still holds true (or that you feel should hold true) in today's society. While creating your product, consider Thoreau’s use of rhetoric: how might his ideas be expressed through a visual medium? You will present your final product to a panel of *Philosophy Now* editors, explaining the choices you made and why it best suits the criteria for publication.

**Expectations**

**Absences:** It is the student's responsibility to contact the teacher regarding their absence. If the absence is anticipated, the student should plan accordingly and meet with teacher ahead of time to go over what needs to be completed before they return to school. If the absence is unexpected, the student should (1) email the teacher and (2) meet with the teacher in person as soon as he or she is back in school. The teacher is willing to work with students to make sure that they stay up to date with assignments and will provide extensions as deemed fair and necessary. Students are responsible for getting notes from classmates and for checking the class Wiki upon being absent. The teacher understands that absences (preferably excused) are expected from time to time, but if unexcused absences become continuous and habitual the student will be expected to have a one-on-one meeting with the teacher.  
  
**Plagiarism:** The classroom's plagiarism policies will reflect those stated in the school handbook. Students are expected to properly cite sources via MLA formatting for each assignment they complete. Students will be provided with thorough citation instructions at the beginning of the year. Students need to be aware that their work may be scanned for plagiarism at any time, and if plagiarism is detected the teacher and student will schedule a meeting in which they will discuss the violation and do their best to correct the issue in a way that is best suited for the  
base requirements on the school's policy.  
  
**Assignments:** Every assignment will have a clear and reasonable due date. If a student feels that he or she needs an extended period of time to complete an assignment, they are encouraged to meet with the teacher to discuss their situation and potential options for accommodations. If a student does not meet with the teacher and fails to hand their work in on time, they will sacrifice 10% of their grade for every day the assignment is late. If a student is absent on the day an assignment is due, they are expected to hand their work in as soon as they return to school and schedule a meeting with the teacher. All written assignments should have one-inch margins, be double spaced, and written in Times New Roman size 12 font. All assignments should include a header with the student's name, class period, and date.  
  
**Classroom Expectations:** All students are expected to contribute to the classroom's safe, inclusive learning environment. This means that they must demonstrate respect for themselves, their peers, the teacher, and classroom materials at all times. Students are expected to maintain an open line of communication with the teacher so that the teacher can best meet their needs. Students are encouraged to collaborate with each other and to participate in class discussions and activities on a regular basis. Students must arrive to class on time with all their necessary texts/materials, assignments, and with an open mind.

**Benchmarks (500 points total)**

* **Blogs posts and responses (90pts):** Students will each create a blog via Blogger in which they write one entry in response to each assigned reading. Students may choose from a list of prompt or write a free-response. Students will be expected to provide thorough insight and exploration of at least one aspect of the text within each entry. Students will be expected to comment on one of their classmate's posts in addition to writing their own post following each reading. Students must cite the book properly on their blog.
* **Podcast (60pts):** In pairs or small groups, students will create a podcast that documents and analyzes Thoreau's experience on Walden Pond. Students may critique Thoreau's ideas and experiences in order to show their understanding of the text and Thoreau's purpose behind his writing of the book. Students are encouraged to being their personal opinions into the podcast as long as they back them up with evidence.
* **Google Doc Spreadsheet (30pts):** As a class, students will compile a cited list of the rhetorical devices that Thoreau uses. Each student will be expected to identify and enter at least 5 different devices into the spreadsheet, properly citing a passage where each device is found. Devices may overlap, but the same example may not be used more than once.
* **Prezi (60pts):** Working alone or in pairs, students will chose at least 5 rhetorical devices from the class spreadsheet to elaborate on in a Prezi. The Prezi will include the type of device, at least one example of where it is found in the *Walden* and a description of how it functions in the text and how it may contribute to the text's power, persuasiveness, and/or beauty. Each student/pair will present their Prezi to the class.
* **Interactive timelines (30pts):** Students will create a timeline of Thoreau's experience at Walden Pond along with a timeline of their own lives, paying particular attention to experiences/themes that are found in the text that also relate to at least one aspect of their own lives/experience. They will then focus on this similar theme and elaborate on it in the next benchmark, the iMovie.
* **iMovie (80pts):** Students will document their own "transcendental" experience in an iMovie. They will chose at least one theme from *Walden* that they can somehow connect to their own life/experience and explain this connection in the iMovie.
* **Performance Task: Multimedia rendition of one theme from *Walden* (150pts):** see performance task description above.

**Grading Scale**

**A** (93 -100), **A-** (90 - 92), **B+** (87 - 89), **B** (83 - 86), **B-** (80 - 82), **C+**(77 - 79), **C** (73-76), **C-** (70 - 72), **D+**(67 - 69), **D** (63 - 66), **D-** (60 - 62), **F** (0 - 59).